



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release DEC 04 1985

Michael L. Smith (202) 343-5634

INTERIOR OFFICIAL ADDRESSES DOWNTOWN LIONS, CALLS FOR GREATER CITIZEN ROLE IN SAFEGUARDING NATURAL RESOURCES

Assistant Interior Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks William P. Horn, in addressing the Downtown Lions Club today, called for greater citizen awareness of their responsibilities in protecting America's natural resources.

"Each of us is an owner," said Horn in describing the National Parks and Wildlife Refuges he administers for the Interior Department. "And each of us has the responsibility to take care of this public trust." In emphasizing the "Take Pride in America" theme recently initiated by Interior Secretary Donald P. Hodel, Horn noted that in the past there was a tendency for many to regard parks and other public lands as belonging to everyone, and thus no one. That type of viewpoint, Horn added, contributes to neglect and vandalism of public recreation resources. Public lands--federal, State, and local--represent over one-third the total U.S. land area.

Horn invited the Lions to join in the "Take Pride" initiative and cited the Lions for their leadership in local service efforts, including environmental improvement projects. The "Take Pride" effort will not only focus on federal lands, but public recreational lands under State and local jurisdictions as well.

Also in his comments today, Horn praised Wichita resident Sheldon Coleman for the impetus he provided to the creation of the recently established President's Commission on Americans Outdoors. Coleman, who is a member of the commission, is Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of The Coleman Company, Inc., a national manufacturer of outdoor recreational equipment.

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Horn also praised American sportsmen for being "the folks whose license moneys and revenue taxes have funded the world's foremost and best system of wildlife conservation. These are the people who taxed themselves so that other living creatures could thrive in productive habitats. Sportsmen and women," he said, "are much more in tune with nature, with the give and take of the seasons, than either the plunderer or the protectionist."

Horn said he was referring to the Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937, which was passed during the depths of the Depression at the urging of sportsmen, establishing an excise tax on sporting arms and ammunition for use by the States in wildlife restoration projects. Pittman-Robertson funded projects are credited with the recovery of wild turkey, pronghorn antelope, and white-tail deer populations and many other species in many parts of the country. Citing the \$1.5 billion raised through the program to set aside 4 million acres of wildlife areas and another 40 million acres for wildlife management, Horn called it "landmark legislation" and said the Department of the Interior was preparing special observances to mark the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Act.

Wetlands preservation, Horn noted, represents one of the most pressing needs in American conservation. More than half of America's original wetlands have been lost, he said. In acknowledging sportsmen/conservationist concern over the loss of these habitats, Horn detailed current Department of the Interior programs to halt wetland losses.